



Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 109

CREATING THE EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE -- BUILDING A "STRENGTH-BASED" ORGANIZATION (PART 3)

How do the twelve questions relate to unit performance (outcomes)?

To this point, you would have to take my word that the twelve questions actually measured the "best" workplaces. How did the authors find the connection between the twelve questions and higher-performing units/departments?

Gallup conducted a massive investigation to find out. They researched 24 different countries, a cross section of 12 distinct industries, for scores measuring four business outcomes: productivity, profitability, employee retention, and customer satisfaction. In all, 2500 business units (factory, department, branch, hotel, store, etc.) were included. 105,000 employees took the twelve question survey.

Previous to this study, there was a scarcity of data linking employee opinions to business unit performance. This relationship is presumed to exist, since we often hear the statements "Happy employees are more productive" or "If you treat your people right, they will treat your customers right." However, in practice, attempts to actually prove these statements often fail. Changing often the questions, small sample sizes from just within one industry or company, and vastly different ways of measuring outcomes has made it nearly impossible to correlate employee satisfaction with outcomes. In this case, armed with a massive set of data, the authors used a statistical method that permitted cutting through the different performance measures used by different companies, allowing them to focus on the real links between employee opinions and business unit performance.

First, their analysis indicated employees who answered more positively to the twelve questions worked in business units with better business outcomes -- higher levels of productivity, profitability, employee retention, and customer satisfaction (further study beyond what was reported in the book also includes safety).

Second, the analysis revealed that employees rated the questions differently depending upon their own business unit, rather than which company. In other words, the employees' twelve opinions were being formed by their immediate manager, rather than by the policies or procedures of the overall company. **They had discovered that the manager, not pay, benefits, perks, or a charismatic corporate leader, was the critical player in building a strong workplace. The manager (supervisor) was the key!**

The links:

-- Every one of the twelve questions was linked to at least one of the business outcomes above; most linked to two or more.

-- The most consistent links (10 of the 12) were to the productivity measure.

-- Eight questions linked to profitability measure. This may seem surprising, since there are many factors beyond the individual's control that affect the business' profitability. However, there are many ways employees can be more efficient in their daily tasks.

-- **Five questions related to employee retention.** These were:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?

What is most important to notice here is these five questions are most directly affected by the employee's immediate supervisor. It tells us that people leave supervisors, not organizations. The challenge of keeping good people is often primarily focused on such things as better pay, perks, and training. However, this tells us turnover is mostly a direct supervisor issue. If the unit has a turnover problem, first look to the local leadership!

-- The most powerful questions are those with the strongest links to the most business outcomes. The following six are the most powerful:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the past seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?

6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?

As a supervisor, to build a strong and productive workplace, first begin with working to get "strongly agrees" to these six.

In essence, the forgoing tells us that an employee may join the Coast Guard because she is lured by our missions, careers, responsibility, core values, military service, training, education benefits, etc. But it is the relationship with her immediate supervisor that will determine how long she stays and how productive she is while on board.

Next: Managers (Supervisors) Trump Companies.

Regards, FL Ames

For more information about the research and book 'First Break All the Rules' please refer to web site <http://www.gallup.com/poll/managing/grtwrkplc.asp>

Note: The latest issue of *The Leadership News* is on the Web at: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wt/g-wtl/news/fall00/>

Articles include:

[Coast Guard to Break All the Rules?](#)

[Use Local College Courses for Professional Development ... and Retention](#)

[Leadership Development Center Courses Can Earn You College Credits](#)

[Enlisted Coast Guard Training and Experience Now Count for Even More](#)

[My First Salute Opened a Door](#)

[Silence Feeds Hatred: Lessons from the Holocaust Still Apply Today](#)

[Leadership Challenge: Do the Job Yourself or Train Someone Else?](#)

[Emotional Competence and Leadership](#)

[Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Working Blue](#)

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